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Hoquiam dump designed for long life

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By JOHN DODGE
Daily World Writer

The City of Hoquiam won't have to worry about what to do with its garbage for many years to come.

The city landfill, located in a 42-acre canyon north of town next to Highway 101, has an estimated life of at least 60 years, based on past volumes, city public works director Terry Ward said.

Burying garbage there for just over six years, the city conservatively estimates the dump has a 2.8 million cubic yard capacity, Ward said.

Even if the city landfill started receiving all of the garbage generated in Grays Harbor, the landfill would last past the turn of the century, Ward said.

In 1983, the city accepted about 40,000 compacted cubic yards — or 60,000 loose cubic yards — of garbage, all of which was categorized as solid waste.

"We're not accepting any industrial waste at the landfill," Ward said.

Most of the garbage transported to the landfill is generated by city residents. But there are some other big clients.

Grays Harbor County sends about 1,000 cubic yards of garbage to Hoquiam each month from its five rural garbage pick-up stations.

ITT Rayonier is also a big customer. The Hoquiam-based company generated about 750 cubic yards of solid waste monthly in 1983 from its local mill operations.

In 1981, Hoquiam accepted Rayonier pulp mill sludge at the city dump on an experimental basis, but found it too messy to handle, Ward said. The sludge shipments to the LeMay dump were resumed.

Rayonier also used to dump another industrial waste at the Hoquiam disposal site until August of 1982 when questions were raised about its potential toxicity.

The material is called chrome lignosulfonate, which is used in the making of drilling mud additive at the Hoquiam mill.

The waste was believed to contain hexavalent chrome, which is a toxic form of chromium — a heavy metal — and the largest form of hazardous waste produced in Washington in 1982 — 237,284 tons, according to DOE records.

Hexavalent chrome, also known as "Chromium 6," is toxic to fish at minute levels. Federal drinking water standards only allow 0.05 parts per million of Chromium 6.

In a worse case scenario, Rayonier estimated that about 1,000 pounds of chromium had been deposited at the landfill over the past 23 years, DOE inspector George Houck said in a Feb. 14, 1983 memo.

But Jerry Schaaf, environmental engineer at Rayonier's Hoquiam mill, said this week that the whole issue is moot.

Using a test method reccomended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1982, Rayonier tests run on the potentially dangerous waste "showed a positive reading for chromium," Schaaf said this week.

"We got concerned about it," Schaaf said.

However, he said, further toxicity tests of the waste "didn't reveal any Chromium 6."

Hoquiam dump not buried by big problems, says DOE

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By JOHN DODGE
Daily World Writer

The LeMay garbage dump east of Aberdeen is not the only landfill with a spotty track record and a need to improve its operation.

A 42-acre landfill owned and operated by the City of Hoquiam north of town has a history of problems, but it also has a system in place which, when it is working, protects the environment, city and state officials agree.

"The key difference between the LeMay dump and Hoquiam's is that Hoquiam has a leachate collection system that appears to be working," state Department of Ecology inspector Brett Betts said. "It (the leachate system) has had a history of bypassing and overflowing, but it's not a problem with the system — it's a problem of maintenance."

The ability to control leachate, a toxic liquid consisting of decomposed garbage, water and residual chemicals, is the key to a landfill's success, or failure. Leachate can be toxic to aquatic life and can contaminate water supplies.

At the Hoquiam dump, a perforated leachate collection pipe is buried at the center of the landfill. The leachate flows through the eight-inch pipe and into a holding pond. It eventually hooks into a city sewer line for transport to the city wastewater treatment plant.

"The basic bottom line is that we are collecting the leachate as much as possible," acting city public works director Terry Ward said. "But during heavy rainfall, the system hasn't always worked."

DEPENDING on rainfall, anywhere from 70,000 to 350,000 gallons of leachate are generated at the landfill daily. State permits for regulating the city wastewater treatment plant capacity allow a maximum of 360,000 gallons of leachate daily.

State inspection records reveal that the leachate system has failed in the past, allowing the noxious waste to spill directly into the nearby Hoquiam River.

The leachate was tested at the landfill for heavy metal concentrations by the state in February of 1978. There were no alarming levels spotted.

The city didn't run a leachate test until July of 1983, even though the original landfill operating plan called for regular monitoring of potential contaminants, according to city records. However, the wastewater, which is comingled with the leachate, is tested regularly at the city sewer treatment plant, Ward said.

Located in a canyon next to Highway 101, the landfill opened in November of 1977. Prior to that, Hoquiam burned its garbage at the same location, but the DOE and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency wanted that practice halted.

In June of 1977, DOE and the city executed a $217,800 grant, matched by city funds, to:

- Purchase 22 acres to add to the existing, 20-acre site.
- Install a surface water and groundwater leachate control

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Hoquiam landfill

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system.

• Build a transfer station at the dump.

• Purchase a crawler-tractor, compactor, dump truck, loader, garbage drop box and container truck.

In February of 1978, city landfill project manager Ward Grassl told DOE that the dump had been operating since Nov. 15, 1977. He said a perimeter ditch encircling the site was in place to catch uncontaminated surface runoff and divert it into the Hoquiam River.

He notified DOE that the on-site leachate collection system was installed in September, but since it wasn't connected yet to the city sewer line, "leachate is going to the river without treatment."

The landfill got off to a rocky start, according to DOE records.

"THE LEACHATE system is in, but not collecting (leachate)," ecology inspector Frank Monahan said in a Feb. 14, 1978 report. "The site was on fire when I was there and there was not water to douse it. Much of the equipment was either broken or not delivered. Generally, the place has problems."

Ward said a 1,600-foot-long pipe was installed off-site in the summer of 1978, linking the leachate line to the sewer line. In the interim, he said, leachate was trucked to the treatment plant.

On March 3, 1980, DOE inspector Darryl Anderson pointed out a problem that has plagued the landfill over the years:

"My concern was the large amount of uncontaminated water entering the sewage line from the site while contaminated waters were bypassing the collection system, being collected by the ditch, then (running into) the Hoquiam River," Anderson said. "It seems that the drainage system is not working correctly."

On Dec. 11, 1980, the landfill received a clean bill of health from the ecology department.

But problems surfaced again during a Feb. 1, 1983 inspection by ecology and county health officials.

"The leachate collection system was not working due to either neglect or disregard," DOE inspector Greg Cloud said.

"The ditches are hard to maintain in heavy rains," Ward said. "It's far and away our biggest problem."

Cloud said surface water was percolating in the garbage and entering the Hoquiam River. He called the operation of the landfill "very sloppy."

City officials disagreed with that assessment.

WARD said a mudslide at the dump at the time of the inspection played havoc with the leachate system.

"When we knew about it, we fixed it," Ward said.

DOE inspector Betts toured the Hoquiam dump in December of 1983 and found the operation to be in order.

In recent weeks, the DOE has pressured Harold LeMay Enterprises to upgrade its landfill east of Aberdeen. The state considers LeMay's leachate system woefully inadequate. The LeMay system involves trying to keep all the leachate trapped on the landfill property.

LeMay officials have reacted strongly, claiming the state is picking on them and ignoring problems at the Hoquiam dump.

Not so, DOE officials said.

"We're sending a letter to Hoquiam, imposing many of the same conditions on them as we have LeMay," Betts responded. "But priority-wise, Hoquiam is well down on our list."

"We've done everything we've been told to do," Ward said of the city's landfill operation.

"The difference between LeMay and the city landfill is that we're trying while LeMay has developed an adversarial relationship with DOE."

THE types of things each dump operator must do include:

• Conduct geology-hydrology studies.

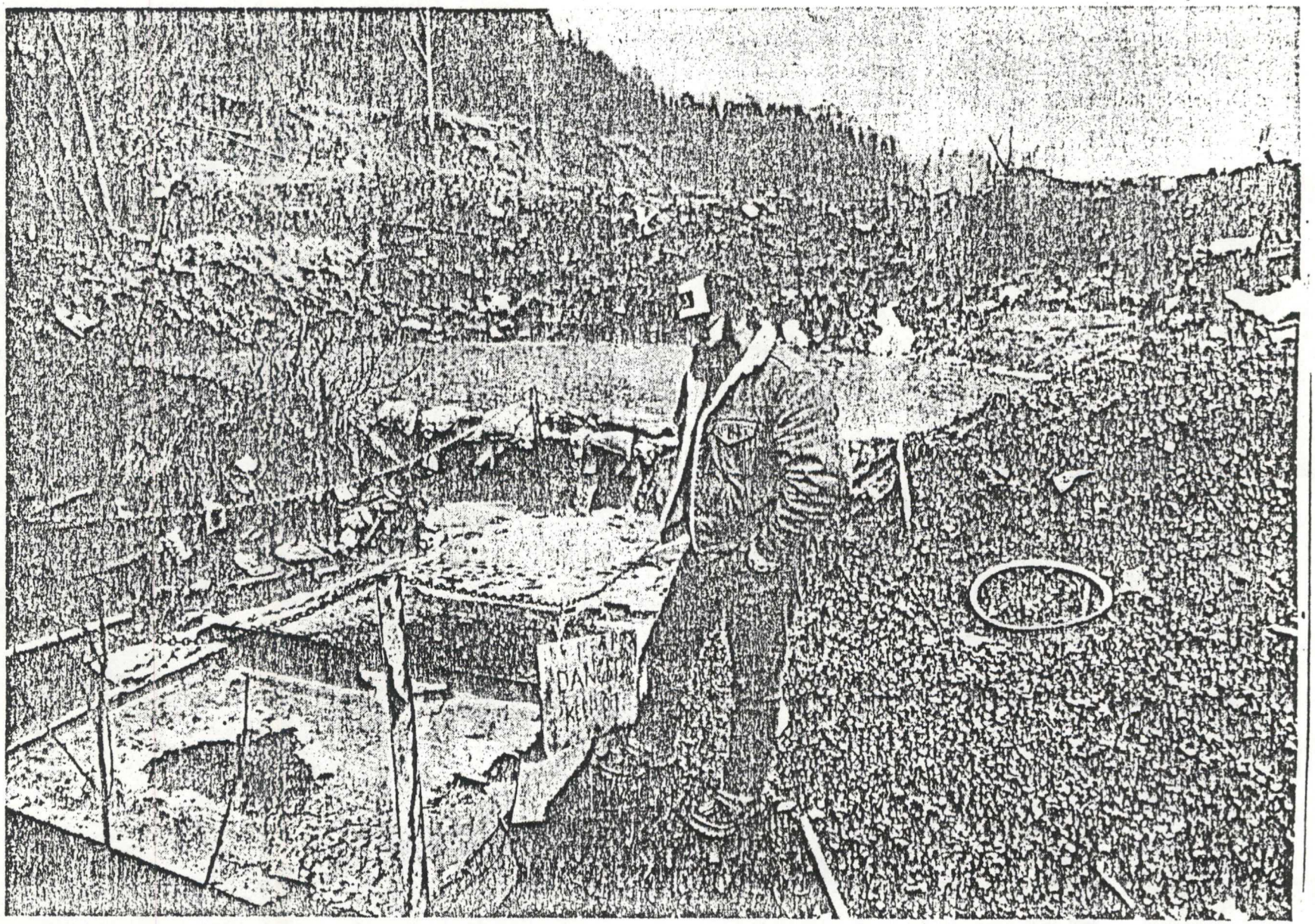
• Monitor ground water and surface water

• Improve record keeping to identify all waste deposited at the dump.

Ward said the city will have no difficulties complying with the DOE order. For instance, the city drilled four monitoring wells at the dump several years ago and found groundwater in only one of them.

The possibility of leachate polluting drinking water in Hoquiam is not an issue, even though the dump is located in the city limits.

However, Ward said, the increased landfill surveillance and engineering studies "could increase the cost of disposing of



Operators at the Hoquiam landfill, including LeRoy Foster, use an eight-inch leachate collection pipe to funnel contaminated water generated at the dump into a holding pond from where it evenutally enters the city sewer line for transport and treatment at the city's sewage treatment plant. The leachate system has had its problems in the past, but the city and state Department of Ecology are working together to make the landfill a better operation. (Daily World photo by Kathy Quigg)

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Landfill concerns DOE

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The letter, a copy of which was also sent to the City of Hoquiam, notes, "The well's data demonstrates violations of the state's primary drinking water standards for chromium and lead."

However, Dennis Priebe, Hoquiam Public Works Director, told the council Monday that there is really no reason to suspect that the water and contaminants in the well are getting into the city's drinking water.

"The water in the monitoring well appears to be quite stationary," he explained. Betts' letter went on to note, "Dennis Priebe's statements concerning ground water flow direction appear presumptous and based on minimal data. The proposed contingency plan for the establishment of an additional monitoring well is unacceptable at this time.

"The Department is concerned that not only the monitoring program but also the design/operation of the Hoquiam sanitary landfill has been formulated in a leap frog approach over the several years," Betts said. He also went on to recommend that the county's Health Department begin a comprehensive approach to upgrade the Hoquiam sanitary landfill by requiring preparation of a geohydrological assessment of the landfill.

In another landfill related subject, the council adopted strict rules and regulations pertaining to the operation and maintenance of city-owned equipment at the landfill. For sometime now, several council members have been quite critical of the degree of maintenance of the equipment used at the landfill and in the wake of a decision Monday, employees operating the equipment such as the cat and so forth, will visually inspect the machinery everyday before operation and check for worn parts.

Lube points are to be greased every other day and the equipment is to be washed as needed or at least every other day. Employees are also being reminded to make sure that the key or batteries are turned off and if the equipment is not going to be used for any length of time, that it be placed indoors if at all possible.

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